



The Mystery of Breath

of

Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan

with Commentary

by

Murshid Samuel L. Lewis
(Sufi Ahmed Murad Chisti)

This paper is not to be transferred or duplicated without the expressed written permission of the Sufi Ruhaniat International.

It is intended only for private circulation among initiated Sufi mureeds, and this printing does not constitute publication.

Our goal is to support the work of the Ruhaniat Living Stream Project.

If you wish to print a copy for yourself or a friend, please make a donation to the Sufi Ruhaniat International.

Your receipt acknowledges our permission.

©1978 Sufi Ruhaniat International

SRI Secretariat
PO Box 51118
Eugene OR 97405
USA

telephone: (541) 345-5223
e-mail: ruhaniat@mail.com

The Mystery of Breath

[Editors Note: The text of the Gathekas below that Murshid used for his commentaries is different from the text as published in Volume 7, In an Eastern Rose Garden of The Sufi Message. The meaning of the text appears to be the same; the wording is different.]

GATHEKA: To a mystic the subject of breath is the deepest of all the subjects with which mysticism or philosophy is concerned, because breath is the most important thing in life.

TASAWWUF: Breath is the most important thing in life, for breath is the very life. In the Christian Bible it says, "God is pneuma" which has been translated, "God is a spirit." Actually it means God is breath and the breath we take in and the breathing we do is in reality a spiritual process. The word "spiritual," in addition to other meanings it may have, signifies "that which pertains to the breath."

GATHEKA: The very life of man is breath. He lives in the presence of breath, and in the absence of breath man is called a "corpse." After death the organs of the body are just the same as before; the only thing that has become lacking is his breath.

TASAWWUF: Hindus have paid particular attention to breath, making a scientific study of it. Even without this study we ought to recognize that breath does something which keeps the organs and muscles and tissues from disintegration; it is only after the breathing stops that the chemical disintegration ceases.

The same thing goes on while the soul still inhabits the body. When the breath does not reach a part, when the breathing is incomplete, then there is disease. Most diseases are characterized by deficiencies or disorders in breath. If a careful study of the rhythms of breath were made during each disease, we would see the correspondence between the breath-conditions and the pathological conditions attending disease.

GATHEKA: Breath is that within ourselves which keeps all the parts of the body in connection with one another, working together, depending upon one another; it is that which enables man to move, to put his muscles into action, to keep the whole mechanism of the body always at work. There is no other force or power concerned in all this than the power of breath.

TASAWWUF: What does this power do? It keeps the body working together, all the parts being properly coordinated when the breath is working correctly. Breath-power being spirit-power, the power of breath comes from the spiritual life. We see in the spiritual life the unity of man within and without, and also the harmony between all the people who are spiritual, and we see in the breath-life the coordination of all the parts of the body, so that it acts as a unity.

GATHEKA: Mystics know that it is regularity of breath that brings good health; that irregularity of breath is the cause of all illness. Many teachers and students of physical culture know that it is not the exercises and practices of this culture that cause the muscles to develop, that impart strength and vigor to the body; they know, as did the ancient mystics in India, that it is a matter of the breath.

TASAWWUF: Therefore the students of mysticism pay special attention to breath. As breath is, so to speak, an activity of God, the Sufis practice the presence of God, using a divine concentration, called a Darood, to keep the breath in rhythm, and at the same time coordinating its inner and outer

activities. As God is wisdom, and as Darood is both prayer and suggestion, by it the wisdom can be brought to the breath so that the currents of breath take the perfect rhythm for each occasion, as may be needed to assure the success of the moment or of the duty.

GATHEKA: To practice for one moment with the help of the breath will do more than a whole day's exercises carried on without considering the help of the breath. In the last case the muscles cannot be developed, whereas in the first case the physical body is easily developed with very little physical practice. That this is true is easily shown by looking at the porters on the railway-stations. If the physical labor were the only thing needed to develop muscles, would they not all be veritable Sandows?

TASAWWUF: Tests in India have shown that Hindu porters are often more capable than Western athletes of working in the warm weather, carrying heavy burdens. Despite apparent physical handicaps and under-nourishment, the right use of breath enables them to overcome such handicaps. The yoga exercises and postures are especially adaptable to warm countries, where athletic exercises would be too strenuous. Besides, in Yoga the movements of body are coordinated to breath whereas in athletics the breath is mostly coordinated to the movements of body.

GATHEKA: It is especially in India that we can study how men work with heavy things. Sometimes a man will carry on his shoulder a burden that it would ordinarily be impossible for a man of his physique to carry. Yet such a man cannot only lift it, but he will walk with it. And when you watch you will find that the secret lies in his way of breathing.

TASAWWUF: Solomon has said, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, learn his ways." The ant has been known to carry burdens many times his own weight. The secret is in the breath. The anatomy of the ant is so constituted that the breath tubes (trachea) run all through the body. The breath thereby reaches all parts and by the increased internal pressure, by taking in extra breath, the ant becomes a machine capable of carrying a load many times itself. The secret of the Hindus is nothing but that, to increase the breath within so as to overcome the pressure without.

GATHEKA: There is in India a man called Rama Muti. He can lift elephants and stop motor-cars running in full force. When he was asked, "whence did you get this gigantic strength? You look like an ordinary being, not like a monster," he said, "You know, and yet you do not know. The secret lies in the breath, which is all power."

As man cannot see it he does not believe in the possibility of breath giving power. He attaches all importance to the things he can see and hear and touch. He is so material that he cannot see anything beyond what his physical eyes are able to see. He is like a blind person who can only feel and not see. He cannot see that strength is something greater than a rock.

TASAWWUF: That the strength which is greater than a rock belongs to life can be seen that sometimes a tiny plant, sending its tender root down a fissure in a rock, can ultimately break that rock apart causing it to crumble. What was that? It was the living breath in the root; the breath in the root pushes harder and harder against the rock which is tamasic, characterized by inertia, while the root was rajasic, characterized by action. Then these two forces appear opposed, the rajasic usually predominates, owing to its assimilation of life. It is the breath in the root which brings it the power and this same breath utilized by man can bring him powers much greater than in rocks or roots.

GATHEKA: How difficult it is for a man to perceive the truth of which the Bible speaks: "Your faith will remove mountains." He thinks mountains are stronger than faith. How can faith be stronger than the rocks and the mountains? Man cannot lift the mass of a mountain; surely the mountain is stronger than faith! The idea is too subtle, too fine for him to understand.

TASAWWUF: The mountains are there and the mountains that are so great and strong cannot move anything. This shows *tamas*. The wind and the water which do not seem so strong and the heat and cold erode and destroy the mountains in the course of centuries. This shows that the elements water, air and fire have something of the *rajasic* quality in them that was not in the earth element which is predominantly *tamasic*.

Now man has all qualities, and man has all faculties and if nothing else the skill of the engineer has removed mountains. And in the story of Parvis and Shireen we see this illustrated, how Parvis, through love, drew the strength to build a road through the mountain.

GATHEKA: And it is the same with all other fine and subtle things in life. So much more importance is given to the study of the material sciences, while the spiritual, the higher knowledge, is neglected. More importance is always given to the development of bodily strength. Therefore, when man goes down to the seaside, often the first thing he does is to weigh himself so that he can find out how many pounds he has gained during his holiday. He never thinks how little time it will take for all those pounds to go away again! The weight he has gained at the seaside he will lose again. He does not understand that it is energy that makes a person move and feel active and in good health, not the bodily weight. Is it not true that the addition of weight to the body makes him lazy and comfort-seeking, and often results in illness? And yet how pleased many people are when they have gained in weight!

TASAWWUF: This weight is a *tamasic* condition; excess of physical weight shows *tamas*. Excess of physical activity, living the physical life shows the *tamas*. In Sufism we say that a person who lives under this condition, who desires only to satisfy his physical and material wants is slave to senses, to things, who does not think much or show much consideration, is in the grade of *nufs ammara*.

The quality of activity, of energy, is called in Sanskrit terms *rajas*, and by it and through it comes all the activity. It is *rajas* which creates the civilizations, it is *rajas* which makes us act, do things. Too much *rajas* no doubt ends in nervous affliction and disease, but absence of *rajas* often indicates absence of life and when there is absence of life there is absence of breath, of spirit, so man is incomplete, for man is a spiritual being and he is much more than the physical body and all its appurtenances and functions.

GATHEKA: Then when we consider about mind, we find that breath has to do with mind also. The mystic knows that the breath which we perceive by exhaling and inhaling through the nostrils is not the essential breath, but only the result of a current which runs not only through the body, but also through **all** the planes of man's existence. That which the nostrils feel is the result of the activity of breath. Were it not so we could not explain how the mind, which is so much vaster and finer than the body, and is a separate element, can possibly exert an effect on the body, and the body on the mind.

TASAWWUF: Breath in Sanskrit is called *prana* and in Sufic terms *nufs*. This breath is more than the gas we breathe. The gas which we breathe carries the breath-energy in a somewhat similar fashion to the way a piece of iron carries magnetism. The magnetism which we see in iron and the metals is a

tamasic form of energy, mostly negative, feminine, influencing, but not itself active. Compared with the solid materials, air has much more rajas, is active, in the form we call wind, and also in the form of breath, which is life-giving.

For many generations the scientist thought the air was the gases, oxygen, nitrogen and the rare gases. Then it was discovered that the air and gases carried electric flashes, and other energies. The light passes through the air, the radio waves and other energies which seem to be cosmic pass through the air. But there also passes through the air this prana, which is a finer vibration.

The Hindus recognized in the earth and in atomism the aspects of prakriti, nature. When nature is fecundated by purusha, spirit, it brings forth the trees and plants and when we eat the food thereof, it contains energies called vitamins, energies which come up through the earth breathing in the spiritual energies and these are passed along to man. This is one aspect of life in the body, to develop and preserve form. The other aspect is in the prana of purusha which also carries life elements more directly and these come in through the breath, into the lungs.

In the human body there is an organ, the glottis, in the throat, which operates one way when man eats and drinks and another way when he breathes. By this means the elements of prakriti and purusha, of spirit and matter are separate. Man can exist on earth in the body some little time without food, but except a few adepts, he cannot stop his breath; he would lose his life almost immediately for he depends upon the breath for life.

In addition to that the breath feeds the thought. If you start to think and if while thinking you stop breathing you will also stop thinking; all the thought will go into the breath. If you inhale deeply and hold the breath in, you can be thinking while you have the breath and if you exhale and there is no breath in the body, then there is no life in the body and at the same time there is neither breath nor life in the body, and you cannot think.

GATHEKA: Every passion, every emotion has its effect upon the mind; and every change of mind, however slight, has its effect upon man's body. Physicians in all ages have realized that consumption is generally the outcome of constant worry.

TASAWWUF: Every passion and emotion comes when one of the five elements in the breath, earth or air or fire or water or ether, is present in too great a quantity or is absent. When these elements are not in the right order, or are not balanced, then man is subject to the emotions. When he learns how to control the breath and knows the science of elements, then he is no longer subject to emotions.

Worry and other emotions stop breathing, the breath and the life will not enter the body. Then man is short-winded, there is low blood pressure. His energy is in the thought-sphere and his ego is over-active. When the ego is over-active it draws the energy from the breath, and when it draws the energy from the breath, health suffers; there is no longer rhythm or balance.

GATHEKA: What keeps mind and body connected? What keeps the mind always active? What gives mind its vigor to create imaginations, to create thoughts, and not only to create them but to retain them by the faculty we call memory; to keep the knowledge gained by the faculty we call reason; to possess emotions which can sometimes be felt and sometimes not felt? Where does the mind keep all these things? What force can it be that is behind them all? Is it not the breath? That is why the mystic

studies and realizes and masters the breath, in order to master not only the physical body but also the mind.

TASAWWUF: This can be proven easily, that if we try to create an imagination, to imagine a new house or a new suit of clothes, or a new scene and then to breathe and to stop breathing we shall soon discover that the energy we needed to retain the imaginative faculty came from the breath. The same is true if we try to remember something we have known and forgotten; if we are not breathing right, if we lack the breath, we have trouble in remembering and if we can retain the breath and consider the breath as holy and living, the memory will remain alive and it will be easy to retain knowledge and recall facts even long gone out of the mind. And the same is true with reason and all mental and intellectual functions, when we have the breath, they are easy.

In old age sometimes one or more of these functions weakens, although not always so and some people live many years and instead of losing mental magnetism increase it. This is because they have guarded their breath, either by the way of life or by special knowledge of the breath, knowledge which helps to purify the mind and does not keep it dependent upon the body so that when the body grows old the mind needs to grow old.

GATHEKA: From the mystical point of view it is evident that there is some strength, some current, some affinity which runs through and binds together all the trees and plants in a forest, and causes the desert to be without them; which causes the coal-mine to have coal, the gold-mine to have gold, the sulfur-mine to have sulfur all around it. This strength or force draws all these elements together.

TASAWWUF: The force called adhesion keeps the particles of one kind of matter together. It is almost an aspect of love, atomic love. This shows that the love-force is in nature, prakriti. How does this love-force get into nature? The love-force is the same as the life-force and this operates also through the breath in order to impregnate the dense matter.

Besides that, if we make a study of the currents of air over the different parts of the world, the air which is the vehicle of breath and the physical carrier of the rainfall, we find that in different parts of the world the weather is very different and this is due to the elements of breath, that the water element brings the rainfall and water with fire the thunder-storms, and the absence of water the dry places, of which there are many kinds, the Sahara being the desert where the ether and fire elements are together and the tundra where the ether is with earth and the fire is absent, so it is cold. The ethereal element suspends activity and in that the ether is non-rajasic while the other elements are more or less rajasic—earth, water, fire and air each in turn being more rajasic than the other.

GATHEKA: So it is too with the tides of the sea, that accounts for the waters running in the same direction, whether at first they tended towards the south, the east, the west, and north; that accounts for the surface of the waves keeping the rhythm. Wherever we look, be it the changes of the seasons, the changes of the weather, or even the constant circles which the earth makes in its journey, all these show the same underlying current, the current of the whole of Nature, which is the real breath.

TASAWWUF: The scientists have already noticed about the tides, that they are the result of the moon-breath upon the earth, the moon alone or in conjunction with the solar force or in conflict with it. All these affect the tides of the sea and also affect the blood-rhythms in the body which are akin to the tides, which compose the sea within man.

The whole of movement is to be regarded as an activity of the Cosmic Breath. God spoke and the world was made. The Sufic metaphysics said that there was a contracting movement followed by an expansive movement and this brought the creation of the Universe, which is an activity or breathing of God. Brahma as Creator or Maker also means breather and there is a Hindu conception of the world being an activity of Divine Breath which at the end of a period called a pralaya will be redissolved back into the deity.

Actually it is an allegory as the processes of creation and dissolution are both going on all the time showing that the breathing is going on all the time.

GATHEKA: The whole universe is going on with a certain rhythm; there is a current which keeps the whole universe going. It is one breath, and yet it is many breaths.

TASAWWUF: We see something of the one breath in astronomy, in the study of the sun and light, of the laws of light, how they behave. We see something of the many breaths in astrology, which observes the rhythms of the planets. All these planets are connected with the sun, have no life or existence apart from the sun and yet each has its own rhythm. The astrologers have made particular study of the planetary movements around the sun and have paid little attention to the rotary planets. They also have not always made it clear just what is the relation of the solar planetary movements with respect to life on earth and particularly with respect to our individual existence.

If there is an occult basis or astrology it is this, that there are a multitude of potential grooves around the sun, and that a body or a force taking a particular groove would enter a rhythm, the rhythm of the planets nearer the sun being less than those far away until we get to Neptune and go past it, when the rhythmical periods are quite long lasting many years.

Theoretically there could be any number of rhythms, but mental activities settled into certain rhythms and these mental activities drew the matter into these same rhythms and this determined the path of the planets, each planet has therefore gotten into a rhythm with a mental activity and signification and there is supposed to be a more or less exact correspondence between mental tendencies and planetary rhythms. It is thus by reading a person's chart one uses the planets to measure these mental rhythms and tendencies. The planets do not cause or affect, they measure these rhythms and tendencies, and the same principles operate in both mental and physical worlds. This accounts for the validity of astrology.

GATHEKA: There is a tide which has a cycle of forty days, and a tide which has a cycle of seven days, and another of thirty days; and yet at every moment waves are rising and filling. There is a wave under the wave and a wave over the wave. There is a tide of two to the day, and also a tide of one to the month. So is it with Breath: one breath, and yet many breaths.

TASAWWUF: The difference is that the rhythms of tide are rhythms which use the water element while the breath operates through the air element, yet we find the life forces there, the forces which come from the sun and moon in the tides, and yet they also affect the breath, causing the movement called Sun and Moon breaths, which come in the currents called Jelal and Jemal by the Sufis, although there is an exact sun breath and moon breath which are more limited than the Jelal and Jemal currents.

Even when one element dominates in the breath, there are combinations of the elements, and different rhythms therefrom as earth element tends to make the breath slow and air element makes it rapid, water elements makes it fall and fire element causes it to rise.

GATHEKA: Then consider how the trees keep together. One tree, and yet its branches and its fruits and its flowers all take different directions. Every branch has a different direction, and yet all keep together. What is it that directs the vigor and the strength of one branch and not the others into that direction, for they are all attached to the same tree-stem! Is it not that life-current which runs through it that directs their ways? As long as it runs through a tree it produces fruit and flowers.

TASAWWUF: We have seen that the life is maintained and sustained in the human body by the breath and the dissolution at so-called death is accounted for only by withdrawal of the breath, which is the cause of all unities, the cause of the unity of the elements of the body and the cause of the unity and harmony between the different bodies of the solar universe we call stars. The same atomic unity and harmony is found in the vegetable world in every tree.

Only the breath is not just the physical elements, the breath has life, the breath is spirit. And what is spirit? If spirit were merely the fineness of matter and contained nothing but the material properties in finer degree it would be matter. Yes, spirit does contain the material properties in finer degree but spirit also contains in greater degree its own properties which are found in the lesser degree in matter. So this spirit is a Spirit of Guidance or Wisdom found in all things, and which in the vegetable kingdom—which lacks a nervous system—operates through the breath so that the breath brings not so much the chemical energies to the plants as the vital energies, energies which become vitamins in the atoms, but which have the properties of wisdom and life in the vibrations.

GATHEKA: So it is with animals and birds and man. The same current of life runs through all.

TASAWWUF: This current is called Hay, which is breath or being in the Semitic languages. The Hebrew peoples call the animals, **Hayoth**, the feminine plural of Hay, which is to say, the breaths taking on forms, the breaths in the material, the prakritic breaths. They call life Hayyim which is the masculine plural of Hay, which is to say, the breaths or life-energies working through the spirit, transcending form. So **Hayoth** are temporal, material, limited, and the Hayyim, are eternal, spiritual, unlimited, but there is the same essence or current, Hay, and the Sufis called God, Hayy, the Living, or Livingness.

This idea is also seen in the story of Adam and Eve, that Eve means the Life, the Life which ultimately expresses itself in form or matter, and so gives birth to things, and Adam is both the earth itself in one aspect and God in another aspect, although we should accept it as meaning the life-giving-activity which is found throughout all humankind. In other words Eve is life-making-form and Adam is life-making-energies.

GATHEKA: Man is the ideal being, as the Scripture says. He is ideal because intelligence is given to him to perceive the secret of this breath, whereas to animals and birds it is hidden. The life of all creatures is mysterious and full of wonder, but man alone is blessed with the intelligence which conveys the power of understanding the secret of the Breath. If there is anything more lasting than our transitory life it is this, the secret of our being. It is by this that man is able to master life both here and in the hereafter.

TASAWWUF: Some will say, no, there is a connection between mind and matter which is found in the brain and nerves. Yes, that is true, the nerves collect the experiences and energies from the surface and bring them to the mind, only they also do this by the energy drawn from the breath—the nerve-energy is a form of breath energy, it is vital life force. The nerves are the creatures of the prakriti for this purpose, the contributions of matter.

The nerves of birds, beasts and man are about the same and the physical aspect of life is almost the same also, but the other aspect, the receptivity to the light or intelligence and the ability to understand and express the intelligence openly and consciously belongs alone to man. It is only man that can control his breath, master the emotions and thoughts and know all sciences and arts.

GATHEKA: Having understood this truth, mystics have been able to teach that the religion of all religions is the knowledge of self, for the knowledge of self brings the knowledge of life. This life current which runs through the center of man's being, attaching mind to body and to all other planes of existence as well, it is this that is all-important.

TASAWWUF: Therefore too much attention can hardly be given the breath. Sufis watch their breath often. One way of doing this is to watch the feet, to control the breath by the pace in walking to feel the breath in the feet, to seem to be walking upon air. When one feels the breath in the feet, that brings psychic power to the feet. Besides, it means that the breath is penetrating the whole personality, for it requires concentration and attention to feel the breath all the way to the feet and when one can do this, he is also by the same power able to carry the breath to all parts of his personality and being. Also, when one seems to walk in the breath or upon the breath, one is raised, so to speak, above the denseness of earth, and this leads toward mastery.

GATHEKA: It passes from man's innermost being out to the body, which is the instrument whereby man is able to experience life on the surface. When he has knowledge of this, man begins to realize that, "I am not as small as I had thought, not as weak as I had thought; I am much stronger on other planes. I can live much longer than I could on the physical plane. I can see myself on all the different planes by means of that inner knowledge of the Breath."

TASAWWUF: In other words, the breath brings with it life and energy and knowledge. It is not the chemicals alone which come in with the exhalation although one should not say that the gases one takes in and expels are insignificant. If that were so, it would not matter so much whether one was upon a mountain top or at the sea shore, or deep within the bowels of the earth—and there is a decided difference not only in the gases one breathes in these difference places, but in the energies one receives, and in the activities one is capable of conducting within and without.

For instance, high up one not only takes in less oxygen, but one is less capable of physical activity, and more capable at times of imaginative and spiritual activity. On the other hand, deep within the earth is more air-pressure, much oxygen, but the forces become destructive and dense.

Breath can change from coarse to fine and fine to coarse and in the different aspects of life, physical, mental and spiritual, it does change. Therefore it is possible also by consciously producing the type of breath best adopted for physical, mental and spiritual states, one can do the best work on each plane according to the need.

GATHEKA: Therefore, to the mystic, Breath is like a lift—a lift in which he sits and rises up to the first floor, and then to the second, and then to the third floor—in fact whichever he wishes to go.

TASAWWUF: Because in inhalation energies are taken from the material world and carried to the spiritual world and in exhalation energies are taken from the coarser world and brought to the finer worlds. One example of this is that sensation which influences the mind is best when there is inhalation while speech which is a method of bringing thoughts to the surface requires the exhalation.

GATHEKA: The mystery of the Sphinx, and the mystery of Burrak (which is mentioned in the Qur'an, chap. 17), has to do with this. When the Prophet reached the court, or gate, of God, the Burrak was sent. The Burrak was an animal with wings, and the Prophet rode upon it in order to reach the gate of the highest heaven. He passed through gate after gate as he passed the seven heavens. In the end he arrived at the gate of the highest. What does this allegory mean?

The body of the Burrak is this physical body. The wings represent the ability of the breath reaching far and yet retaining its connection with the physical body. The Prophet mounting upon his back represents any soul who treads the spiritual path. Whoever has courage, whoever has faith, whoever has confidence, whoever has trust, whoever has patience and hope and perseverance, can tread this Path and make use of the vehicle—the Breath.

TASAWWUF: Although the breath has not been considered of much importance in the orthodox Islam, yet all the great mystics have passed through stages of the breath. One can tell this from symbols, that whenever there are wings in the symbol it indicates breath, as in the Lardi of the Egyptians and the eagle-symbol and Merkabah (chariot)—symbol of the Beni Israel and in the Sufi Symbols and in all symbols with wings, that indicates breath and the movements of breath.

In the Bible we find numerous instances of prophets going up into the breath or spirit and in India by a conscious direction of breath attempts are made to enter into Samadhi. Therefore the science of breath has been kept sacred and secret, because the highest states of breath can only come when self-annihilation (fana) is practiced, otherwise any exercise or attempt to use the breath will drive man back into a worse condition than before he knew the breath.

The myth of the Tower of Babel in the Bible is this, that Babel really means the gate to heaven. The tower by which men could go up and down is the same breath which reaches from earth to heaven. The people wanted to use the breath to gain the power and mastery of heaven instead of practicing fana. Then, even with all their practices, the force became concentrated upon nafs, the self, which is the opposite to fana, and the coarse breath came instead of the fine breath, and they lost the ability to have the fine breath and ended in confusion (karma, samsara).

That is also why Hatha Yoga does not bring salvation. One can try many exercises, postures, breathings, concentrations, repetitions of words, and if one has not the sacred attitude, there will be the coarse breath, and this coarse breath, with any exercise or method, will only fall back to earth and bring further confusion. That is why yoga training without a master is dangerous; it brings the same curse as befell mankind at the tower of Babel.

GATHEKA: If we read the history of Buddha, who was a yogi, we shall find that without yoga and without spiritual meditation (which is accomplished by breath) no one in this world has ever attained spiritual perfection.

TASAWWUF: Buddha performed all the exercises of his time and then learning them, reformed the practices. He found that when there was self-activity, self-concentration, self-conception, self-thought, all the postures and prescriptions would not bring release. All tapas was of no use if there was egocentricity. He broke down his egocentricity. However, among the Buddhists some have retained only the opposite to egocentricity and held on to selflessness without the practices, and they have not found release. For release there must be both the exercises and the selflessness.

GATHEKA: The healing power of Christ, the magnetism of Mohammed, the miraculous power of Moses, the charm of Krishna and the inspiration of Buddha—all these were attained by Breath.

TASAWWUF: In Sufic esotericism (Ryazat) consciously or unconsciously one receives the training which imparts the healing power and magnetism and charm and perfection of all faculties. One of this comes in psychology, some in concentration, but most has been preserved as part of esotericism, and especially in the adsorption of the ego-Spirit into the divinity or into the ideal (fana-fi-Rassoul).

GATHEKA: And how did they attain it if it were not that there is a current passing between us on the earth and the Source of Energy, the Source of Power and Magnetism? Is it not plain that breath conveys even the words which go out from our lips to the ears of the hearer? The voice is Breath. The word is Breath. Without Breath speech cannot be produced. And yet a person may easily accept this and say, "Yes, it is true that it is breath that does this, but he will not willingly believe that thought is breath also. He can see the movement of the air which arises from speech, and he wonders if it is meant that thought also causes a movement of air. This is because he does not understand that it is all a life-current—that is, breath. It is easily seen when it manifests itself upon the physical plane, but on the higher planes it is not seen; yet it extends higher than the planes.

TASAWWUF: The mystics have many practices and the Yogins have built up an advanced science. Some of these principles about the breath and the kind of breathing are found in the Upanishads and other ancient Hindu literature. Even the Egyptian literature which is somewhat older presents the arcane principles of breath, which are given to us in the modern translations in veiled form.

When one depends upon breath and breath-power, forgoing self, one is really leaning upon God Who is all-breath. Although we do not think about it, we do not think that God is in the breath, that the breath is really divine, still the scriptures speak about the Holy Spirit which is nothing but the breath in the divine sense, the divine breath which permeates the whole universe. Just as the breath in man permeates and penetrates the physical body, just as it acts so in the trees, and in the connection of planets with the sun, so the whole universe is held together by the divine breath, the same breath that we inhale and exhale, although we never think about.

In Samadhi this becomes a reality, that we breathe in the universal rhythm and when we breathe the universe rhythm we are in tune with the whole universe and then we can see the reasons for things and all movements and vibrations and rhythms.

GATHEKA: If there is anything that connects man with God, if there is anything that connects the mortal with the immortal, it is nothing but this bridge which we call breath. It is a bridge whereby to pass from the world of mortality to the world of immortality; it is the bridge whereby immortality passes down to mortality. That life which seems mortal is but the ray of immortal life. What seems mortal is the globe or shell. It is not life that is mortal, it is the cover which makes it seem mortal.

TASAWWUF: The Hebrew Bible says, "God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living soul." That is to say, the breath is life and life is the breath. When the body dies, the breath does not die, the breath is withdrawn. We say that the magnetism is in the piece of steel, yet the magnetism is not the steel. We can make the magnetism out of the steel sometimes and we can change it to electricity and motion in the electric dynamo or generator.

While the similarity is only partial, we can take the breath and breath-energy out of the body and this breath does not pass away, it does not perish. Even our mind and our consciousness can rise and fall with the breath so, when the dissolution of body takes place, the mind and consciousness continue to rise and fall with the breath, only the breath no longer penetrates any physical body. That means that just as previous it served to keep the physical body together as a unit, after the so-called death it continues to keep the mental body together as a unit and it is through breath that the mental body kept together and we live on in the mind-world, in the heavens, through this same power of breath.

GATHEKA: From the time when man first perceived that there is a secret in breath, he has wanted to use his understanding of the secret in order to be able to perform wonders and reach the spirits, to master the elements, read thoughts, convey thoughts, and to perform any psychic or occult phenomena. But to seek to do these things is to give pearls to buy pebbles. How wasteful to spend life in gaining these powers when breath is the rope that takes us from this mortal plane to immortality, that saves us from the struggles and worries of this transitory life, and leads us to the happiness and joy and peace for which every soul longs.

TASAWWUF: When the power of breath is used for psychic or occult phenomena, although it gives us ability, new scope, new faculties, it also consumes energy; it takes some of the vital energy out of the breath and consumes it on the plane of the phenomena or faculties desires. This detracts from life, gives new joys and excitements and keeps us uneasy.

The way of the adept is the way of calmness of breath, to make it smooth, even, fine—to bring peace and feel the unity with God. This comes mostly in meditation and contemplation and in these processes already one is living the life eternal although clothed with a physical form, the body.

GATHEKA: If breath can accomplish these pearls, will it not also accomplish the small things, the pebbles, the worldly needs? Yes, it will. To have performed a few wonders is nothing at all.

TASAWWUF: If this is true, then by the power of breath we ought to succeed in whatever we try in life. The Sufi, by the power of concentration, seeks to attain whatever aim or purpose he needs in the life, from the most material to the most spiritual needs. Only he does not waste his energy by going after something which is of no great use or value to his body, mind or heart. To seek something for show, to have power, perform miracles, is vanity, is ego. It is this which brings all unhappiness. To attain the happiness, one should go into another direction and refrain from emphasizing nufs at all times.

GATHEKA: One man is perhaps striving all day to earn his own bread so that he may live in a comfortable manner; another is always worrying about how to maintain himself and his children. Another is thinking, 'What can I do to save my fellow man from his trouble?' If we compare these people, in order to see who is the greater, we see that he is greater whose ideal is greater.

TASAWWUF: The one who seeks for himself is the least, and the one who aims to help humanity is greatest. It is the breadth of vision, the horizon of thoughts that constitutes the real size of our beings, that indicates our stage of evolution. It is this vision and capacity, not the particular abilities we have which constitute the spiritual statue.

GATHEKA: Whenever we consider the great heroes of the past and present, those whom we admire and to whom we look with hope for right guidance, we shall find that what has made them great has been the greatness of their ideal. The lower the ideal, the less the efforts; the higher the ideal, the greater the life. If we direct all our intelligence and strength and wisdom to accomplish some little thing, it is only a waste of life. To consider great things one can accomplish, to seek to do those things which will be most useful and valuable to others, that is the ideal life.

TASAWWUF: This is the living for the not-self. Although we may call something an ideal, seek an ideal, an ideal really is of no importance to us until we are willing to make the self-sacrifice for it. We cannot measure an ideal, say it is our hope, until we show in our lives by a sacrifice that we really want it, want it so much we are willing to sacrifice for it.

The greater the ideal the greater the sacrifice and at the same time the greater the sacrifice of self, the more the unity and harmony with not-self, the greater the capacity we create for spirituality, and this is living the eternal life no matter what the plane of existence or the body we may be inhabiting.

GATHEKA: The man who has earned money only to keep himself comfortable, what has he accomplished with his life? If he has just gratified his wish to roam about in a motor-car, to found a comfortable home, to have people waiting upon him; he cannot be happy, because he has not accomplished anything with his life. He may possess many homes, he may possess much money in the bank, he may make a great name; but it will amount to nothing in comparison with the man whose power is greater than all wealth, position, or fame.

TASAWWUF: The misfortune with this class of men is that when trouble comes, they cannot stand against it. Their power is all based upon vanity, not upon self-control. They have been depending upon others, upon the external conditions, and they have built nothing within themselves. They are subject to the emotions, easily disturbed. In some extremes, when a tragedy occurs they commit-suicide. They have learned nothing spiritual, they have been concerned with nufs, the self, and they are trapped by their own feelings and thoughts, born of their limited outlook.

GATHEKA: Such a man will be much happier with the small things of the world; he has gained that peace with which the pleasures and transitory joys of this earth offer no comparison. The one life is like the lips touching a cup of delicious wine; the other life is like drinking the whole cup full of heavenly wine. What a difference between just touching the wine with the lips, and drinking it!

TASAWWUF: The spiritual person drinks life to the full; he experiences all the vicissitudes and he learns how to keep his balance whether there is pleasure or pain. After a while he will attain a higher peace, a bliss, which comes from the constant soothing of the mind so that he is not disturbed and when he cannot be easily disturbed, he deserves the happiness and finds it.

The other aspect of his life comes from the wide view, that when man lives for a high ideal, and pursues that ideal, then the threshold of the consciousness which has been limited by the ego is broken, and he enters into the state of heavenly bliss, untrammled by self-limitations.

GATHEKA: The pleasures of life are like touching the wine. The experience of these pleasures is only like a dream, a passing joy; it comes and goes again. One longs for the joy of that little pleasure to stay; but how can it stay? If you try for thousands of years, one cannot keep the happiness which is external. The only way to obtain the eternal bliss is to do as the mystics do, and rise by the aid of the breath from plane to plane, finding the greater joy and the greater happiness.

TASAWWUF: To be taken up into the breath, to be absorbed in the breath, is to be taken up into God. There is one way in meditation by which this can be done: to relax thoroughly, loosening all the processes of body and mind, thinking of nothing at all, letting go and feeling the upward and downward currents of the breath. This method is a very ancient one, which was adopted by Buddha from among the various Yogi practices and has been preserved to this day. The Hebrew prophets also knew how to be taken up into the breath although they interpreted it differently.

It is when we get out of the ego, out of the self, do not regard the self as real, regard the life as real, that we partake of the eternal life. This life has been pictured as a tree with its root in the heavens and its foliage upon the earth. Every person is as a leaf of this tree. By meditating deeply upon the life within, by tracing that life back toward its source, we enter into the ranches and trunks.

Now this process, in addition to being a meditation process, in addition to calming the ego and all the waves that arise therefrom, also brings us into the expansion of spirit and with it the great joy that is natural in the universe. It is only the ego that hides this joy; when we escape from the ego-mould it is there, it becomes ours.

GATHEKA: It resembles the taking of a drug. A person may sit in meditation and dream and imagine he is very happy. He may hypnotize himself into thinking he is full of joy.

TASAWWUF: All processes of taking of drugs, imagination and dream, where the sense of ego remains, wherein one is thinking of self, looking at life from the self-point of view, deprive one of magnetism and when one completes the state which is self-induced, there is a loss, there may be depletion and even diseases following. Besides, there never follows any broadness of vision, never any increase of sensitivity, greater consideration, kindness, sympathy. All these things come from the real joy, besides the sense of communication, which is very real. The person that has experienced the real can communicate his joy in part to another, but the one who has drugged has nothing to give to anyone.

GATHEKA: A materially-minded person may easily say this against a meditative person. But he must know if this is not hypnotism when a little word of flattery pleases one, when a little silver and gold produces such a change of expression in one's countenance! But a materialist not understanding this will laugh at a mystic and call him a dreamer!

TASAWWUF: Whenever one is influenced by that which arises without himself he is really in a state of intoxication. Be it pleasure or displeasure, happiness or pain, a soothing word or a calming word, if the influence comes from outside, if it has to be communicated, reach another's brain before one's own, this shows the maya, the ego-illusion, that one is not free. If one's happiness depends upon anything outside of himself, he is not free, he is deluded, only his delusion is worse than the delusion of the mystic, for the mystic can free above pain and disease, and the mystic is not disturbed by his disagreeable experiences. It is that which indicates freedom.

GATHEKA: If the mystic is a dream, what is the worldly man? Is he not a dreamer too? What produces the joy in these things that are of no importance? If it is good for silver and gold to hypnotize, is it not better when the mystic is hypnotized by his divine ideal of perfection? The silver and gold will certainly be snatched away; at least the mystic's ideal of God will last!

TASAWWUF: We see this in so many people, that they long for possessions, wealth, ease. When they get all the wealth and comfort, still they are not always happy, always pleased. There is something else which they do not possess; they do not know what it is. With all their things, they miss something, they long for something. Even if they do not admit it, when a little disturbance comes along, they are disturbed. They are often unstable in marriage, they have nothing to hold on to, and their periods of seeming pleasure or joy are often followed by depression and disagreeableness. With all at their command, they have no command over the self, no control over their own emotions and thoughts—they have become the very slaves of their thoughts and ideals.

The mystic who strives inwardly begins to control his thoughts and emotions. How small they seem in contrast to that glorious vision which has been his experience! How puny compared to the life in God! Even a tragedy sometimes will hardly affect the mystic, who sees the life in all, who knows something about the complete life, the universal life.

GATHEKA: When we consider how this life and our environment can cramp and restrict us, we understand how it is that with all our hopes we still seek solitude, try to be by ourselves, and close our eyes to all the passing things. The life and activity which are directed to experiencing the pleasures of life, the transitory sources of joy and pleasure, all fade away before that which we seek in solitude, where we strive to reach the inner and enduring things.

TASAWWUF: For in the solitude we come face to face with ourselves. Even people who have been wealthy, who have had all things, when they get to the mountain top, get out into the desert, sometimes even when they cross the ocean, feel different. Sometimes going on a vacation, the successful person will say, "This is the life." He does not know it, he is confessing that now he is experiencing something that with all his riches he has missed, he has been missing the life itself.

Some persons are really afraid of the solitude, afraid of themselves, and mostly you see these people suffering from mental delusions, becoming very self-centered, employing doctors and paying them money when really there is very little the matter with them. What really is the matter is the nufs, the ego, about which they have centered everything. They could get away from that, have some ideal, pursue some purpose, they would be well, but some prefer the disease, they want the ego and they will keep the pain with it.

GATHEKA: Even if our bed is comfortable, if our house contains all the comforts that the heart can desire, the mind still goes through all manner of torments, and sleep will not come. We may take a little rest, and sit still in order to obtain peace; but the real trouble never goes. It is to drown this trouble that people take drugs and intoxicants and lose themselves in the pursuit of common things, however undesirable. Everybody strives to obtain some remedy which will enable him to realize the joy and pleasure and peace which his inner life unconsciously seeks; but he cannot get it. If he tries to obtain it through drugs or intoxicants, he only becomes a slave to them. If, failing these, he seeks to gain his desire through other vices, he still fails to obtain contentment.

TASAWWUF: In this man goes from one pole to another, from agitation to the ceasing of agitation. When there is too much agitation he tries to stop it and when it stops he wants it, and he never realizes that there can be release from agitation. He does not know that he can avoid the pains of life, the deep longings. He does not know that the longings arise from spiritual discontent; he does not know anything about spirit. Nufs ammara especially cannot see that nufs ammara is concerned only with the senses, with the material life.

Yet the soul is there, the soul is always trying to impress the body, impress the mind, impress the ego. And when there is no other method, it comes in pain, dissatisfaction, disease, tragedy, great unhappiness, sudden loss and sorrow. It is only by these means that there is any breaking of the tight mould the nufs ammara has woven around the personality.

It is really that such a one has not realized his humanity. He is almost like an animal. Unlike the animal, however, he has been given faculties of discernment, self-consciousness, idealism, and these faculties arouse him to seek happiness. And even if he was shown, he would not accept, it would only be after tremendous suffering he would accept. Therefore some religions have taught reincarnation, to enable the nufs ammara ultimately to come to a state and place where he would accept the spiritual instruction in some form.

GATHEKA: Come to the mystic, then, and sit with him when you are tired of all these other remedies that you have employed in vain; come and take a glass of wine with him. The mystic wine is the inner absorption, which removes all the worries and anxieties and troubles and cares of the physical and mental plane. All these are now done away with forever. He it is who is at rest; he it is who experiences that happiness which no others experience. He it is who teaches the way to attain that peace and happiness which are the original heritage of man's soul.

TASAWWUF: Not by propaganda, not by insistence is anyone to come to the path of God. It is when he begins to awaken, which generally comes from a great loss, great sorrow, great suffering or tragedy that he will look. Of course there are some who are by nature inclined to spirituality, who do not have to go through all tribulation. But mostly humanity has to go through all the valleys of delusion before coming to the valleys mentioned in *Mantik-i-Tair*, whereby they rise above the threshold of ego and ultimately come to enlightenment and deliverance.